

Mr. Barry Faintich
Midwest Money Co.
7921 Forsyth Ave
St. Louis, MO 63105

September 13, 1996

Dear Barry:

You have asked our opinion concerning a U.S. silver dollar dated 1804 which you have submitted to us for study. You have not furnished us with any provenance or any tests or comments made by others with respect to it.

The coin weighs 26.67 grams. It has a modest amount of wear on the raised portions. The fields on both sides are very smooth. There are substantial edge depressions at 10 o'clock and at 4:30 o'clock when the obverse is facing forward. When the obverse is turned on its horizontal axis the reverse is rotated counterclockwise about 20 degrees. The edge lettering and decoration is normal and overlaps slightly from the Castaing machine impressions. The dentils on the borders on each side are radial and have no outer circular band or outline. The obverse dentils are rather weak from 5 o'clock to 10:30 o'clock. The end of the left curl at the top of the head on the obverse is complete and points to the lower right side of B in LIBERTY. The 4 has no crosslet. There is a die break between the upper left serif of D of UNITED and the dentillation; also several minor die breaks between the tops of NITE and the dentillation. There is a straight line break along the right side of D extending to the dentillation. There are breaks from the ends of the two highest wing feathers on the left side. There is a lumpy imperfection under the E of UNITED. There are only 12 arrows in the claw.

So far as is known there are no genuine U.S. dollars dated 1804 struck during the 1804 period. I wrote a book on this subject in 1962 entitled The Fantastic 1804 Dollar. I have supplemented data in this book as recently as 1995 when I wrote "New Thoughts on the US 1804 Dollar and 1804 Eagle Proofs." I have examined many of the U.S. Dollars dated 1804, whether struck in 1834 or thereafter or whether electrotypes, casts, altered dates, or otherwise. There is a chapter in the above book on alterations and I wrote a prior article specifically on the Zerbe 1804 and 1805 date dollar alterations in The Numismatist for October 1961 (copy enclosed).

The primary problem is to determine whether the submitted U.S. Dollar dated 1804 was struck as such or was subsequently altered to appear as an 1804 dollar. All Class I, Class II and Class III

dollars dated 1804 (at present being 15 in number) show the left upper curl on the obverse die broken off. The borders of all known dollars dated 1804 were struck with a circumferential line outside the border beading and no dentillation extending radially to the circumferential edge. This change in border treatment was due to the use of a collar die in 1834 at the U.S. Mint and the unavailability of a collar die in the 1804 period.

Due to these differences the coin presented is not one of the Class I, II or III U.S. dollars dated 1804 struck as such in 1834 and thereafter.

The only alternative for the piece presented being original is that its obverse is from an unknown die made during the 1804 period. The dies made during the 1804 and immediately prior period were prepared with the use of separate device, letter, number and star punches. Coins from each known die were studied and classified by M.H. Bolender in 1950 and others thereafter resulting in many individual die characteristics being observed. Combinations of obverse and reverse dies resulted in coins struck with different dates with the same reverse dies. Some dated obverse dies were modified at the U.S. Mint to a subsequent year.

Except for the 4 in the date, the position of the elements in the submitted piece is identical to the position of all elements of Bolender obverse 6 dated 1803 and reverse A. The 180 of the date in the submitted piece is sized, spaced, and distant from the bust in an identical manner to die 6. The stars and LIBERTY are identically placed as well. The top left curl is identical.

The fact that the reverse of the submitted piece and the reverse A are identical does not help determine whether the obverse of the submitted piece was altered. It does show the genuineness of the reverse of the submitted piece and the original coin.

There is no evidence that the die of 1803 obverse 6 was overdated by punching a 4 over a 3 at the U.S. Mint. No other coin with such a modified die is known and no trace of a 3 beneath the 4 can be seen as in similar overdating of other coins of that period.

To force metal from one position to another by expert tooling or chasing has routinely been done by engravers and no material needs to be added. A 3 can be pushed and worked into a 4. No material for a 4 needs to be attached, welded or hammered onto a coin.

The conclusion reached from our study is that the last figure of the date of a genuine 1803 dollar struck from dies known as Bolender obverse 6 and reverse A has been skillfully altered from a 3 into a 4. This was apparently done about 100 years ago at a time when other U.S. coins were also altered to deceive collectors.

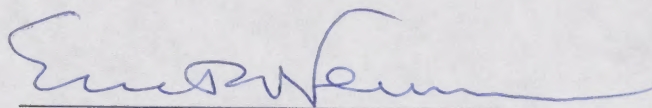
In the submitted piece the stars do not seem to have been altered by repointing as they were in the Zerbe 1804 coin, but in the submitted piece the lower two right stars seem thinner than normal and may have been tampered with.

No X ray or other imaging has been undertaken as it does not seem essential but such research can be undertaken.

We have no comment to make as to the market value the submitted coin may have as a superbly altered genuine coin.

We hope this opinion has been helpful and if there is anything which needs further explanation we shall try to do so. We look forward to having a picture of the coin. The coin has already been returned to you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric P. Newman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric P. Newman, President

Diagnosing the Zerbe 1804 and 1805 Dollars

By

ERIC P. NEWMAN, A.N.A. No. 4624

An Edited Excerpt from a Talk Given at the 1961 A.N.A. Atlanta Convention

THE Zerbe 1804 and 1805 U. S. silver dollars were described for the first time in June, 1961 in a study published in *The Numismatist*, the *Numismatic Scrapbook*, *Coin World* and *Numismatic News*. Their existence was theretofore unknown to most numismatists including myself. Their border dentilation is exactly like all other dollars dated 1803 or earlier which fact distinguishes them from the 1804 dollars described in present and past numismatic literature. Their edge lettering is perfect. They each have the reverse known as Bolender Reverse A which reverse was also used on an aggregate of six varieties of dollars dated 1801, 1802, 1803.

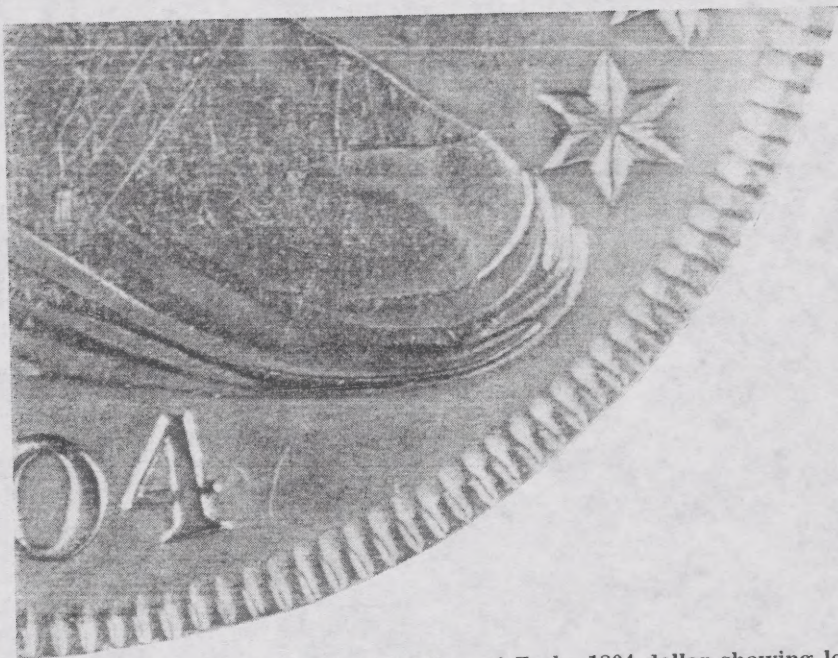
Since altered date 1804 dollars are not uncommon, a large amount of research went into the elimination of the possibility that the last figure of the date of a dollar from an earlier year had been removed and either a separate figure 4 or 5 soldered or otherwise affixed to the original coin. High magnification showed no joint on any part of the date on either coin. The most important point stressed respecting the 1804 and 1805 dollars, however, was that if the last figure of the date was disregarded, the obverse of each piece was different from all other known obverse die varieties. In other words, the relative position of the stars, letters and bust on each coin was different from all other obverses regardless of the date.

Both coins were sent from England to Miss M. A. Dunn of Brooklyn in 1939 with the suggestion by Spinks of London that they be shown to the late B. G. Johnson of St. Louis for verification. Arthur B. Kelley remembers Johnson showing them to him at that time. Johnson wrote to Miss Dunn that they were not genuine. Farran Zerbe, retired curator of the then Chase National Bank, considered them alter-

ations as did his successor, Vernon L. Brown. Zerbe bought them for \$50 in April, 1940.

A challenge of the 1804 Zerbe dollar could be made on the basis that the reverse of the coin shows a die state prior to the die state on some 1803 dollars, but during this period it was normal to alternate the dies of any date until they broke. A challenge of the 1805 Zerbe dollar could be made on the basis that the 5 stylistically is unlike the 5 used on 1805 half dollars and other 1805 denominations. This can be answered by pointing out the obvious style differences in the 4 on the United States coins of 1804 (omitting the dollar to avoid controversy). The historical arguments based upon mint records and on mint history, however effective, do not explain away the fact that the Zerbe dollars do actually exist.

A careful restudy of the Zerbe 1804 and 1805 dollars reveals that the points of some of the stars appeared to have been slightly re-aimed by shaving away and tooling part of the ends and sides. Normal six-pointed stars naturally have their points on opposite sides directly in line with one another, and this is true as to all stars on all obverses of early U. S. dollars. In the Zerbe 1804 the 10 and 4 o'clock points of the upper right star are not in line nor 180 degrees apart. In the Zerbe 1805 the 10 and 4 o'clock of the upper right star, the 1 and 7 o'clock points (see illustration) and the 10 and 4 o'clock points of the second star from the top on the right and the 10 and 4 o'clock points on the lower left star are not in line nor 180 degrees apart. All other stars on these coins have their opposite points in line and 180 degrees apart. With this clue it became clear that the star points could have been tampered with to avoid basic similarity to a known variety of another date.



Enlargement of lower right portion of Zerbe 1804 dollar showing long horizontal die break on bust and into field in line with center of lower right star. This identical die break is found in various stages on the 1802 over 1 (B-4) dollars.



Enlargement of upper right portion of Zerbe 1805 dollar showing tiny die flake on top of curl below center of R, as also found on 1803 (B-6) dollars. The unnatural misalignment of the 11 and 5 o'clock points of the highest star is evident, showing the 11 o'clock point aiming under the top serif of Y instead of to the right of it as on the 1803 (B-6).

On comparing the positions of the other stars relative to the bust, letters, and the 188 border dentils and disregarding the last figure of the date, it becomes clear that each element of the 1804 Zerbe dollar is identical to the 1802 over 1 Bolender 4 variety. On both of these coins the base of the E in LIBERTY is properly higher than the adjacent B and the figure 1 of the date is in the identical position of contact with the curl. A horizontal chest die break is found on both (see illustration). The reverses also correspond in die state.

Similarly each element of the 1805 Zerbe dollar, excluding the questioned stars and the last figure of the date, is identical with the large date 1803 dollar Bolender 6 variety. There are two tiny die breaks on the top of the curls under R and T on both the 1805 and 1803 B-6 (see illustration). Likewise, the lower left stars are too close and almost touch. The reverses also correspond in die state.

The conclusion may therefore be reached that since some of the stars on two separate well-known 1802 and 1803 dies show evidence of alteration that the last figure of the date could also have been altered, the 4 from a 2 and the 5 from a 3. Both Zerbe 1804 and 1805 dollars have

always been together. Their basic 1802 and 1803 dies had star points in perfect condition. The fact that each of the Zerbe coins has acquired similar star point defects at critical places for die variety determination is most significant.

There is one more alternate to consider, namely, that the coins might be genuine overdates and that the mint modified the dies by punching a 4 over a 2 and a 5 over a 3 at the time of their dating. There is no evidence on either coin of such overdating as there is on all other overdates of the period. An examination of the questioned star points under high magnification indicates that the stars in each die were probably not repunched or recut, but were altered on the coins themselves. It is believed that this overdate thought must therefore be rejected.

To force metal from one position to another by expert tooling or chasing has been done before, but the skill and perseverance which would have been required in altering these coins is indeed fantastic.

I hope that the new facts which are pointed out with respect to these coins will not dim the hope of every numismatist to locate and reveal the identity of an unknown coin to the world.

Obituary

CONRAD A. KAHLER, A.N.A. NO. 27083

Conrad A. ("Conny") Kahler, 33, Carlisle, Pa., Assistant Professor and Librarian at Dickinson College, passed away June 17. A member of the Mother Church, the First Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, Mass., and of the First Church of Christ Scientist, Carlisle, he was laid to rest in Highland Cemetery, Winfield, Kans.

Born in Coffeyville, Kans., November 23, 1927, the son of Lt. Comdr. and Mrs. Arthur D. Kahler, USN (Ret.), he attended public schools in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He received his B.A. degree from Southwestern College in 1949, M.A. degree from Kansas State in 1951 and his M.L.S. from Rutgers in 1958. During his public school and college career, Conny was a star athlete, winning letters in football, basketball, baseball and golf. He was a shrewd and outstanding quarterback at Southwestern in 1946 where his father was Athletic Director and Head Football Coach. He was a member of both the Football and Basketball Hall of Fame as well as the American Library Association. He and his father belonged to the American Numismatic Association. He is survived by his parents and a brother, Dan A., Principal of the Arkansas City, Kans., Senior High School. — EGB

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